THE EVERGREEN TREE

Poems

THE EVERGREEN TREE

POEMS BY

KATHLEEN MILLAY

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To

HOWARD IRVING YOUNG

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YEAR in, year out,
No matter what the weather—
A blight upon the harvest
Or a storm upon the sea—
Year in, year out,
No matter how the wind blows,
Another ring is added to the evergreen tree.

Immigrant

NOTHING in this house is of my making,
No one in this place is kin to me;
They know me not in sleeping or in waking,
I am alone in this great company.

I want a fire that will be mine for raking,
I want a room will know me for its own,
I want a love that will be mine for taking,
Strangeness and I have lived too long alone.

Mad Harp

I TOOK my harp at daybreak to the hills—
Laughing and gold it caught the rising sun,
While through its strings the merry morning breeze
Frolicked in little harmonies of fun.

I took my harp into a writhing wood
Where thunders crashed and wailing winds were shrill,
And lightnings tore the limbs from tortured trees—
Silent my harp remained, unmoved and still.

I took my harp out on the ragged rocks
When the sea was gray and calm in the night's dim noon—
With piteous harsh discord it cried aloud
As its taut strings snapped in the quiet light of the moon!

Vendor

I HAVE beads of jade and amber,
Turquoise beads are green and blue,
Beads of topaz like the sunlight,
Opal beads of rainbow hue,
Turquoise beads are green and blue,
Come buy! Come buy!

Essence of a convent garden
Sleep-distilled by thieving dew,
Dreams of flower nuns by moonlight
When the cloistered day is through,
Fragrance of the garden dew,
Come buy! Come buy!

Beads of topaz like the sunlight,
Turquoise beads are green and blue,
Dreams of flower nuns by moonlight,
Perfume dreams of convent dew,
Charms to make your dreams come true,
Come buy! Come buy!

Pearl Oyster

I HID my little aching wound
Deep down within my heart,
And moulded all my dying life
Around its living smart,
Until my wound lay buried
In the bravery of art.

Oh, brightly shone its sepulchre!
The sculptured tragedy
Of all my tortured nights and days—
A wondrous thing to see!
The tomb where my remembered pain
Lived to eternity.

The neighbors came to marvel
At its strange and secret glow,
And wanderers from other lands
Said it was like the snow
That hides the lonely mountain peaks
Where flowers never grow.

They hailed me for a prophet
For the things I must have known,
They said I'd be immortal
As the builder of that stone,
They took my grave away from me
And left my grief alone.

For people do not know
That builders always build a screen,
That we who mould on memory
Remember what has been,
And graves remain immortal
Only while their griefs are green.

Sibyl

THEY came to her with little woes
Who knew her to be kind,
They said it was a blessing
To be given such a mind.

A lonely vane swung in the wind
And nailed upon a steeple,
She knew the pain of being wise
Among an unwise people.

Blight

THERE is a need of laughter in the sun!
A host of martyrs has usurped the earth—
Great fighters lose a fight not yet begun;
Heart-hungry clowns are meagre of their mirth;
Youth waits for age till youth itself is done
And half of life is death and half is birth.

Dryad

ONCE a wizard told me
The way to wander free—
If I would say the wondrous word
I never more would be
Imprisoned in a tree!
But when I asked the word to say
The wizard laughed and turned away,
"No one," he said, "has ever heard
"The 'Open Sesame!' "

Time

MANY a maid learns unbelief,
Whose brief delight is lasting grief,
Time, at best, is but a thief.

Many a laugh that echoes loud
Will find a grave in some dark cloud,
Time, at best, is but a shroud.

Many a youth a-top a stile
Will never walk another mile,
Time, at best, is but a while.

Justice

SHE was pale and tall and slender,
Like a white birch in the wind;
Lone she lived, too proud to tender
Feigned regret for having sinned.

Lone she died, and good folk send her
Flowers she can not refuse,
And some holy man will render
Tribute she can never use.

Welcome

FAR from the sound of this lean shore
I heard the birds that used to sing,
And wanted what I had before,
And wearied of my wandering.

I came back to the barren mead
Where loneliness would know its own—
The world had worried it with seed
And thick unfriendly things had grown.

I ran to find the laughing stream
That danced upon its way to sea—
The lonely stones were like a dream
That waited for what used to be.

I hunted the enchanted hill
Where fairy children loved to play—
The hill I found was strange and still,
The children all had gone away.

But surely then, the friendly wood—?
My forest will remember me!
Here is the place I know it stood—
A town too thrifty for a tree.

This and This and This

I THOUGHT this and this and this—
Oh, I was so very young!
This and this and this were true,
But what had truth and youth to do
With a world that never knew
This and this and this?

Sphinx

HER hungers were imprisoned beasts
That prowled incessantly,
And shook the cage her body was,
In wild captivity;
But oh, she knew that cage of old—
It would not let them free!

And silently she watched the world—
Oh, secret silently!
And silently she listened
To her soul's tormented plea,
And motionless she heard it scream,
"Dear God! Hold on to me!"

Helen

AM I to blame that one proud man's desire
Brought devastation on a mighty race?
Am I to blame that my unquenchèd fire
Wanted a young man in an old man's place?
Is it for love of me, this clash of arms!
Or does an old man's pride sound these alarms!
Yet am I sung till agèd tongues shall tire,
Yet am I cursed till hatred shall expire,
For being what all mankind would embrace,
For having what men call a pretty face.

Wise Woman

YES, you will hurt me,
That I know;
There'll be a time when the wind will blow
Over the fields where we used to go;
There'll be a time,
Ah, yes, I know,
Where the daisies bloomed and the rose would grow
Over the fields that are white with snow;
But now—
Ah, no!

Mary Magdalene

SHE loved him with a longing
That ached within her breast,
Hurt, unhappy,
Mary Magdalene.

She loved him with a wanting
That would not let her rest,
Weeping, wandering,
Mary Magdalene.

He told her of another love
That knew no need of lust,
Lovely, lovely,
Mary Magdalene.

And she wondered, were he woman
Would he think that God was Just?
Wanting, wanting,
Mary Magdalene.

The Spinner's Song

NO time, no time, to sing my songs,
But time to spin my spinning!
No way, no way, to right the wrongs,
But ways enough for sinning.

No laugh to take, no laugh to give,
But tears and tears for crying;
No living worth the death to live,
But life enough for dying.

Treaty

MY Lover, take me quickly
Before I've time to doubt,
Make me forget I've thoughts to think
Or they will wear me out,
No need to fear I'll trouble you
Or follow you about,
I never yet blamed any man
Who put my thoughts to rout.

AND is great love simply a love that's lasting,
With future beauty but reechoed pasts?
All other worths are measured by contrasting;
One everlasting feast is kin to fasting;
Life is but moments—and no moment lasts.

The Happy Flower

JUST a piece of precious amber,
Just a bit of fragile lace,
A little bowl of buttercups
Beside the fireplace,
You hated her
Because she had a lovely flower face.

You hated her
Because she planted crocuses in spring,
You hurt her
Just because she never harmed a living thing,
You killed her
Just because she loved to live and laugh and sing.

The Prostitute Speaks

YOU know me for a tinsel slave,
(Cursed be the stealth that sired me!)
You dangle gold and buy a grave
That holds the priceless love I gave,
You do not know I have been brave
And it has tired me.
Here's to the health that hired me!

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Reality

I DREAMED you said you loved me—
Hand in hand
Through daisied fields
Where thick and lovely weeds
Caught at our laughter
Wanting us to stay,
Through mossy woods
Where cool and dark and soundless
We two had fled away,
And hand in hand
And all alone
Had wandered,
Or very near and still
We two had stood
And never cared what way we turned
To follow,
Or if perhaps we would be there forever;
I heard you say you loved me—
And awoke
And knew it was my singing dream that spoke.

Now like a blight that bitterly has found me
The barren light of day blackens around me,
I am alone and lost,
And cry aloud!
Wanting my dream to laugh away the cloud!
You are not here
And daylight is but seeming—
Tonight I will awaken to my dreaming.

The Little Gift of Laughter

NEVER tell a young thing
"Be happy while you may!"
There was never worried song
Nor youth that hurried to be long
Before it died away.
Never tell a bird to sing
Just because a lovely spring
Was never known to stay;
Let the happy laugh and play,
Let come after what come may!

Seeress

COVER her eyes that have seen too much,
Seen too much of the weeping world;
Shut the world from her weary sight;
Bury her deep in the sleepless night;
Never ask if her eyes were right,
That have seen too much of the weeping world.

New York

CHILDREN playing in the streets
Running up and down—
Pink ribbons, blue ribbons,
Red hair and brown—
What were people thinking of
To build such a town!

Seamstress

WONDER where I put my shears?
Hear that silly hound a-barking!
Wonder what he thinks he hears?
Strange, I should be harking—
Wish he'd stop his barking.
Funny thing about those shears—
Wonder what he thinks he hears?
Silly dog to bark at fears—
Silly to be harking!
Wonder if we're given ears
To hear a hound dog barking?
Queer, I haven't found those shears—
Funny, what he thinks he hears;
Hounds have got such funny ears—
Strange I should be harking;
Like as not he's hunting shears!
Wish he'd stop his barking!

Friends

BECAUSE of other people
I let my lover go.
They came to me and told me things
I did not want to know.
They proved to me beyond a doubt
That it was better so.

They said that he would break my heart
With careless cruelty,
They pointed out a hundred truths
I did not want to see—
And they broke my heart in proving
That he never did love me.

Hypocrite

NEVER believe me when I now belie them,
Those brave, unguarded truths I told to you;
Truths do not change, and so we must deny them,
Who know we can not bear them to be true.

Pendulum

SHE danced a mirthless measure,
She laughed a lifeless dole—
Blessed with a need for pleasure,
Cursed with a sullen soul.

Mute

STILL my daily bread I earn,
Still I eat my daily bread;
Still at night I twist and turn
And writhe upon my tired bed;
Still I ponder right and wrong—
Why happy people die instead?
How a harp can live so long
After all its songs are dead?

Sluggard

I MUST grow up and be heart broken,
I must be hard and lonely wise,
Never believe a sweet word spoken,
Never respond to seeking eyes;

I shall grow on to easy sameness,
I shall forget the laughing wild,
And all content with busy tameness,
Never regret this hungry child.

The Gutter Child's Song

OH, if my songs were Japanese,
A mighty lord would come to claim me!
And if I had a Hindu heart
The Western walls would crumble down!
But I was born a singing thing
With no one round to name me,
And so I'll never wed a king,
And sit all day beneath a crown
And wear a velvet gown.

Oh, if my songs were Japanese
I would not wander where I please,
And show my lovely dimpled knees,
And let my hair come tumbling down
Around a singing clown!

And if I had a Hindu heart
I could not ride a trundling cart,
And sin and slumber at my ease
Beside the road, beneath the trees!

To An Insurance Agent

WHO will love me when I'm old,
When my heart is lone and cold,
When my songs are gone forever,
And my dusky hair is gray?

Shall I set aside a lover
'Gainst the time when love is over?
Shall I tell him he must wait
Until my laughter's died away?

Ah, no, no! I'll never tell him!
I'll not try to buy and sell him—
For you can not save a lover
Up against a rainy day!

Dancer

A STAR, burned out by sadness,
Falling in a silver swoon,
She flamed in sudden gladness—
For a moment gone too soon,
Like the memory of madness
Or the echo of a moon.

The Mirror of Gamelot

THE tragedy that ages youth
Is not that lovers all deceive;
The tragedy that ages youth
Is—lying lovers tell the truth,
The love we want is make-believe.

The Fatal Wheel

TIME will reap when the blade be ready,
Death will gather the bleeding tithe;
None can stay though the pulse be steady,
None can speed though the spirit writhe—
The grindstone under the blunted scythe.

The Death of Youth

I'D come to you again, My Love,
Who made me once forget;
No iron pride withholds me here,
No softness of regret,

Nor vanity, nor jealousy,
Nor shy and crimson shame,
Nor hate, nor fear, nor any lust
That's known by any name;

But why should I be coming now?
I've nothing now to bring—
Illusion can be just as dead
As any other thing.

I'd come to you in sunshine
And I'd come to you in rain,
If I could know the ignorance
Of other years again.

But why should I be finding you?
There's death in being wise—
I would not find forgetfulness,
Remembering your lies.

Growth

WHEN at her breast my mother laid me,
With the faith of simple thirst
I believed the need that preyed me
Would be quiet—and I nursed;
Now I'm what the world has made me,
Beast at best and wise at worst,
Knowing I am want accursed.

Alternative

SHE loved them both and left them both,
More lonely and more wise;
For one of them told only truths
And one told only lies.

And, being men,
They gallantly demanded that she choose
The one she loved
And nevermore love him who chanced to lose.

She's left them both, she loves them both,
Alone she laughs and cries—
Who could not choose
Between a dream that lives and life that dies.

Sewing Circle

STRANGE a heart should break so stilly,
Letting not a ripple show,
Just a something dead where something
Lived a little while ago.

Just a neighbor need of talking
While the mending travelled by,
Just a friendly tongue attending
To the ravel of a lie.

Strange a heart should bleed so stilly,
Pierced by poisoned needles through,
Strange I still am mending easy,
Just pretending that I knew
All the truths they told of you.

Sisters

OH, be we got of Christian or Confucian,
We all of us are daughters of the moon—
Nor any right, nor any restitution,
Nor cursèd spell, nor blessèd absolution,
Nor any magic of the silver spoon,
Can save us from the tears we're weeping soon.

Oh, be we born to high or lowly station,
We can not hide a truth that is revealed,
Our bones must dance the writhing of damnation,
The mighty cosmic rhythm of creation,
Oh, be we born to barter or to yield,
We can not fight a fate already sealed.

We'll find no rhyme nor reason, kind or clever,
The mighty crying will be quiet never,
Oh, be we born to reign or born to kneel,
We won't escape the loneliness we feel;
The mighty rhythm will grind on forever,
Oh, be we wise or be we blind or clever,
Our bones will writhe upon the crimson wheel.

Three Songs of a Homekeeper

I

HER throbbing thoughts beat leaden time
As she rolled out the bread—
I'm worn with being unalive
And being not yet dead.

II

Bitter, bitter, bitter,
Under a burdened sky,
I've a weary head and I want to be dead—
But I do not want to die.

III

I can neither go nor stay,
(Keep the cradle rocking,)
Though there's nothing I can say,
Still I must be talking;
Though there's nothing I can spend,
Still I must be buying;
There is neither start nor end,
Neither life nor dying—
There, Dear, don't be crying,
Mother's only talking—
(Keep the cradle rocking.)

Autobiography

THERE was silence in her laughter,
There was death behind her smile—
Strange they never saw till after
She was dead for quite a while.

Epitaph for a Merrymaker

SHE lived in the darkness of lonely light,
She died in the weeping of song—
Who proved to the world she was really right,
While she proved to herself she was wrong.

Beacon

I AM betrayed by Beauty!
It has beckoned me
Far beyond my meagre reach of mooring,
And I have followed on,
Unquestioning.

Till now—
Stricken with sudden blindness in the light,
I reel against the black of nothingness
And clutch at chaos!
Stagger and fall and cry aloud in anguish,
Groping the touch of Beauty's guiding hand—
"I need a light that's tangible!"

Far, far away
Beauty has answered me—
The beckoning laughter echoes
On and on,
Farther and far—
Till it is lost to hearing.

I am alone, uncertain and afraid.

Philosophy

LONG after I am dead
Water will sparkle in sunshine,
Mist will shut down on the sea,
And the sun sink beyond the dark mountains;
Black waters will plunge in white spume
On salt white sands and black ledges,
While the moon grows larger and smaller
Over again and over.
And these are the thoughts that restore me
When my life becomes weary of sorrow—
For what may a troubled heart matter
With leaves turning red in the autumn?
But these are the thoughts that rouse me
To bitter wrath and bleak laughter—
That my wound should be more to me
Than I to the mist and the mountains.

?

WHY will people never say
The things all people know?
Why must truth be smiled upon
As if it were not so?

What is pride that it should cost
The tragic price we give?
Or are we just heart-broken brutes
That can not bear to live?

Wealth

IT'S little I envy my neighbor's worth,
I've baubles a-plenty to treasure and vaunt,
But my soul is sick with the waste of the world—
And I am weary of want.

I MUST out and play again into the salt sea air!
And not be reading things in books and sitting in this chair.

I must run along the shore and laugh while yet there's time,
And find some woods to wander in and hills for me to climb.

I know where a fir tree gnarls itself into a seat
Above a lovely frog pond, green and gold beyond your feet.

I could find the muddy place where pink Mayflowers hide,
The clearing, burnt by fire, half way up the mountain side.

I could find where, if you listen, there's a Whippoorwill
Down where the fog is rising white and ominous and still.

I know where a mountain stream is made from little brooks—
Why should I be reading things that writers write in books?

What to me the towers made of nickels and of dimes?
I have seen a beech tree struck by lightning seven times!

In His Own Image

ROUND and round and round and round
Tramps the tiger in her bed,
Lest the friendly nest she found
Should unfriendly be instead.

Round and round and round and round,
Tramp the thoughts of humankind,
Lest a neighbor hear a sound,
Lest a neighbor find
What is in our mind.

Prayer

OH, God, take back this passion that torments me!
Let me have rest a while in simple peace;
Send me a quiet darkness that contents me,
Wanting no reason, seeking no release.

If you have marked the frightened sparrow's falling,
If you have watched where birth's long vigil keeps,
If you have heard the most forsaken calling—
Why am I waking when my neighbor sleeps!

Agnostics

"IS there a God?" said the Willow Tree,
"Is there a God!
"Is there a God!
"That sends this man to torture me?"
"Is there a God?" said the Fish in the Sea,
"That brings this man with his mighty rod!"

Wise Men

IN this world of changing season,
Changing truth and changing treason,
Wise men never stop to reason.

In this world of many places,
Many customs, many races,
Wise men wear a thousand faces.

In this world that tears and shatters
Human hearts to shreds and tatters,
Wise men know that nothing matters.

The Pyramids

ROCKS have crumbled into dust,
And forests fallen to decay;
Lives have lived a little while
And gone upon their lifeless way;
The restless and unceasing sea
Harries the everchanging land,
But we who house eternal death
Are built on everlasting sand.

The Winter World

I WENT to see a frozen world,
When I was very small,
Where all the folks excepting me
Were grown up very tall,
And all the grown-up faces
Were cold as frozen rain—
I never knew till I grew up
That they were cold with pain.

Hardihood

OF all the truths, I know but one
That never seems to fail—
The trees that quiver in the sun
Are strongest in a gale.

To the Reaper

TAKE my head for death and duty,
But forever in my heart
Sings the tortured birth of beauty!
Lives the anguish that is art!

The Return

"I WILL go back again," I said,
"And find the child I used to be."
But when I asked them, Was she dead?
They strangely smiled and looked at me.
And queer was the way they looked at me.
"I have come back again," I said,
"To be the child I used to be."
"You have come back to be the dead,"
They said. They said, "And so have we."

Gong

I CAN not hear if my songs be singing,
Today they are no part of me;
Bells be still or bells be ringing,
I can not tell if my songs be singing,
Today I hear only the sound of the sea
That strikes the shore by the aspen tree,
And calls and calls on the heart of me:
Come see! Come see!
Where you want to be!
Come down, come down, to the deathless sea,
Where you long to be, where you long to be.
Come down! Come down! You belong to me!

Like a mighty gong that is ringing, ringing,
Come down, come down, to the deathless sea!
My songs be still or my songs be singing,
I can not tell what my songs may be;
Today I hear only the gong of the sea:
You belong to me.
You belong to me.
Come down, come down, where you long to be.
Go down to the gong that is ringing, ringing,
I can not tell if my songs be singing,
Today there is only the gong of the sea,
That would still forever my songs and me.

Come see! Come see!
Where you long to be.
Come down, come down to the deathless sea,
That would drown forever my tears and me.
Go down, go down,
Where I want to be.

The Death of the Minstrel

I HAVE tried to sing my songs,
Weary, weary under the moon,
I've done my best to sing my songs,
But the tears have come where a laugh belongs,
And I've come to the end of my singing soon,
I'm weary, weary under the moon;
I've tried my best to be laughing free,
But I got my tears of the weeping sea,
And my songs were born of the deaths of me,
And I've come to the end of my songs too soon,
And I am weary under the moon.

Charon

SOFTLY, softly, laps the water
Underneath my old canoe,
Lonely come I back forever,
And I never will be through;

Gently, Lord, for I am weary
Of the ones that do not smile,
Let me find a friendly soul
That we may talk a while.

Tramp

ALL the dull day through
The tempest grew
While at her mooring my ship was straining,
Till at turn of tide
As the gray light died,
The cable groaned its last complaining,
And the rusty chain
Gave 'neath the strain,
As, with the sea, its burden shifted,
And my glad ship leapt—
While ashore I slept
And snugly dreamed that the storm had lifted.

Oh, it may be now
That her graceful prow
Has struck on a rock and been torn asunder,
For the wind blew north
When she sailed forth,
And the lightning flashed with the crash of thunder.
Or she may rest
On the sea's calm breast,
With never a cloud in the sky above her,
And the sun may shine
On that ship of mine,
And the warm south winds may gently love her.

But forevermore
On the sea's gray shore
I'll watch for a sail that'll not be showing,
And I'll start awake
When the great storms break,
Only to know I can never be knowing,

And to wonder if she
Is glad to be free,
With no hand at the helm to contradict—
Or if she is sad
For the anchor she had,
A homeless and hopeless derelict.

Revolution

OH, ye million little people,
Creeping round your little fires,
Creeping in your neighbor's footprints,
Wary, round and round and round,
Will ye never lift your longing
From your fretful, small desires!
Will ye never see the burning
Of the worlds above the ground?
Will ye never leave your turning,
Weary, round and round and round?

Anchor

IF you were gone away from me forever,
If I should know I never more
Would look upon your face,
I would go on my way
A different thing,
Baffled and wondering,
A runner on a lone and endless race,
A stranger on a dark and shoreless sea.

Serenade

I TOOK my little song around
And sang it to my lover—
High up and low down,
And like a bird a-flying!
I took it to my loving lad
And now I would I never had!
High up and low down,
And like a wind a-crying—
My little song is dying.

Back and forth and through the town,
And up the hill and going down,
I took my little song around
And sang it to my lover,
Deep down and under ground
And dead and under cover—
I took my little song around
And sang it to my lover.

IT'S woods I want and the sea,
It's wide, black, wind blown spaces
Where I may breathe and be free,
And forget the thousand faces
That sneer and smile and know,
That pry and question and wonder—
It's ice I want and the snow,
It's lightning I want and the thunder.

The Flight

I BUILT my blocks up up into a tower,
Higher and higher till they reached the sky!
I made a clock that never struck the hour,
Because the cuckoo bird was free to fly!

My singing tower stands against the weather,
Rain can not hurt a castle in the air;
My open cage was such a lovely tether
The cuckoo bird came back and nested there.

The Frog Prince

OH, sure and I've loved you
With bleak winds a-blowing!
And rain storm and hail storm
And snow storm a-snowing;
Oh, sure and I've loved you
Beyond any knowing!

But there flies a black cloud
Of thin crows a-cawing,
And there flows a streamlet
To freedom and thawing.

Oh, sure and I loved you
Beyond any growing,
When frost held the frogland
From freedom and flowing;
But green ponds have called me,
And, sure, I'll be going!

The Dance of the Leaves

CRIMSON gold and crimson scarlet
Laughing round and round and round
Scarlet leaf and scarlet berry
Here's my hand and madly merry
Madly round and round
Till we're fainting on the ground
Falling to the sound
Of winds a-whirling round
Till upon the ground we're lying
Harlequin and Columbine
Here's my hand and laughing crying
Tell me you'll be mine
Crimson Columbine
Golden laughing golden crying
Madly round and round and round
Dancing Harlequin is dying
Rainbow on the ground
Dancing Harlequin is dying
Lift his laughing lips to thine
Rainbow living rainbow dying
Golden Columbine
Harlequin is thine
Crimson laughing crimson crying
Golden round and round and round
Pale Pierrot will soon be lying
Dead upon the ground
Pale Pierrot will soon be dying
Lift your scarlet lips to mine
Madly laughing madly crying
Scarlet Columbine
Dead Pierrot is thine
Madly swirling madly twirling

Madly whirling round and round
Scarlet leaf and scarlet berry
Madly madly madly merry
Sadly to the sound
Of winds a-whirling round
Madly living madly dying
Sadly round and round and round
Laughing Columbine is crying
Crying on the ground
Madly singing madly sighing
Sadly round and round and round
Lovely Columbine is dying
Dying to the sound
Of winds a-whirling round
Winds are madly whirling whirling
Leaves are whirling round
Scarlet on the ground

Kin

LIGHTNING haunts my dwelling,
Dread ghost of the deathless rain,
It enters my cozy kitchen
By the weeping window pane,
It hunts every nook and cranny
Where once the sunshine played,
It looks in the pantry closet
Where the cookies always stayed—
And it finds my hungry little ghost
That never will be laid!

The Unseen Ship

OH, I'll build me a phantom ship,
From the silver gray of the fog I'll hew it,
And its sail shall be the foam of the sea
And the wind shall whistle through it!

Gray shadow daughter of the storm,
She will flaunt her flag when the thunders crash,
Flying the proud and ragged shroud
Of a jagged lightning flash!

And down the silver phosphorus
In the silver light of a night of stars,
We'll find some free, unfathomed sea,
Beyond all chartered bars.

To a Bewildered One

YOU played your game too hard, my dear,
And like a tired child you weep;
You paid for stakes that now are here
Piled high about you in a heap,
And are not worth the while to keep;
You can not buy a smile, my dear,
You can not pay for sleep.

To a Woman Who Can Not Hear

SEEKING the light of friendly conversation,
You graciously attend a little while;
Your eager eyes, in fatal penetration,
Have hunted every face for explanation
And found the patient pity of our guile—
Within the silence of your isolation
You sit in awful judgment of a smile.

V

Upon Being Told to Put On My Hat In St. Paul's Cathedral

AND have I, then, so grievously offended
By mighty breach that never can be mended,
Oh, Christ, Thou only gentle One and lonely,
Dear Lord, Thou ever simple One and kind,
I who have loved Thee ever and Thee only,
Thou who hast loved the beggared and the blind?
And hast Thou, then, so soon again descended
From Thy great cross unknown and unattended,
Only to hear this mumbling and to find
This sorry pomp that Thou wouldst never mind?

Gargoyles

SET a knave to catch a knave,
And let the devil eat the devil!
Snug within the narrow cave,
Up and down the aisles are level,
Up and down the candles wave—
Let the brave fight out the brave,
Let the daylight rout the day—
Straight ahead the aisles are level,
Night will drive the dark away;
Eerie white the candles sway—
Up and down the aisles are level,
Straight ahead the narrow nave—
We have naught but souls to save!
Let the brave eat up the brave,
And the devil take the devil!

La Rue du Chat Qui Pêche

ONCE a sly and slumb'ring cat
Lone and lean and hungry sat
A-fishing in a brook;
Dark by day and dark by night,
Down a way was never bright,
Eyes that need no other light
Through the blackness leer and look,
Claws that greed for any fight
Are hunger sharpened for a hook.

Dark by night and dark by day,
Fish and brook have lost their way,
But where that sly and slumb'ring cat
Lone and lean and hungry sat,
The lonely cat holds sway—
Prowling the brook they took away.

Ireland

I

WHERE the black and rugged Kerry cows
Go down the bog in a hungry flock,
And a white and solemn bearded goat
Sits ruminating on a rock.

II

Sure the water's as black as the wing of the raven
That gleams in the light when it's flying across,
And there's never a tree that's not heavy with ivy,
And never a rock that's not softened with moss.

Glengarriff

GO there, if you can,
And if not—then,
Why, hear me!
I know a place where the wild heather grows
By the black silver sea that reflects it so clearly,
And there's never a night but the blue heron goes
To be finding its nest in the tree tops so nearly
It swings with the wind from wherever it blows!
Sure it can not be sung,
The dear land that I'm singing,
The nest that is swung and the wind that is swinging,
The season that comes and the season that goes;
Oh, there's never a way for a song to be bringing
The shift of the tide and the way that it flows;
The lift of a wing when a gull will be winging,
The drift of the moon,
And the droop of a rose.

Spell

TELL me the tale you'll be telling me soon,
Show me the laughter you most have been prizing,
Make me forget we are only at noon—
I am too lonely away from the moon,
And my love is too late in arising!

The Two Oak Trees

TONIGHT I heard you cry and my dream awoke me,
It seemed I heard you weep and my dream awoke—
Oh, little sound of wind in the little oak tree!
And mighty sound of wind in the mighty oak!
Tonight I have heard the words you never spoke.

Cowards

SAFE on the gallows of friends everlasting
We hanged the dear laughter of love for a while—
Swing we high in the wind and weather,
Sing and cry while we two together
Will walk alone in the death of a smile,
And want for the feast that is fed by a fasting,
And long for the laughter that lives for a while.

Inharmony

STRANGE, strange, for the wind to be blowing,
Strange for a harp to be hung in a tree;
Strange for a heart that is young to be knowing
The truths that are old as the wandering sea;
Strange you should never be letting me be—
But must ever be sung with the wind in the tree.

To An Unexpected Guest

YOU see me now as they have seen me
Who have known me sad wherever I may go,
You knocked to find a gladness that you knew
And found a truth you had no right to know;
For one brief sight you caught me unawares,
And like a thief upon my frightened stairs
I showed you grief I did not want to show,
I let you in to need you might not know.

So leave me now—ah, yes, ah, swiftly go!
I too have opened what I would not know,
I too have found my weeping—ah, I too,
Have seen the madness I had thought was you;
I too have sought and entered unawares
And found you lean upon your empty stairs.
So leave me now—ah, yes, I beg you to!
But knock tonight as you were wont to do—
Try once again and I will not be true.

Crucifix

TAKE with you my heart for a charm and a token,
May it make you remember my laughter and me,
May it keep you from harm—
Why, of course, it is broken!
Only the dead can be laughing and free.
A heart that was whole I'd be keeping with me.

Lullaby

NEVER believe I have not wept
For weary want of you,
Many's the lonely watch I've kept
While through the night the hours crept,
And the grey morning slowly grew;
Never believe I have not wept,
Many's the sleep I might have slept
While through the night the morning crept—
Cock-a-doodle-doo!

There's a Linnet Singing in the Linden Tree!

THERE'S a linnet singing in the linden tree,
High-le-O! For his lovely, lovely, Lady-O!
There's a linnet singing in the linden tree,
And I would that my lover were singing to me,
But he left me alone for a song of the sea,
Heigh-Ho! For a loving, loving, Laddy-O!

There's a linnet singing in the linden tree,
Heigh-Ho! For a loving, loving, Laddy-O!
There's a linnet singing in the linden tree,
And I laughed at my love when he left for the sea,
And I told him that lonely I never would be,
Sing Ho! For a lovely, lying, Lady-O!

Bastard

WHAT have I to hope hereafter?
Only hunger, only fears—
Who was got in love and laughter,
Who was born in hate and tears.

Spectre

SURELY I am yours utterly—
And yet, sometimes, it seems to me
I am not here at all,
And never have been here;
Surely I love you utterly,
And yet, sometimes, it seems that we
Are but a dream,
And suddenly,
Into a silence desolate and drear,
Into a night unknown and never seen,
I shall awake—
And we be lonely for my sake.

Exile

LET'S dream us back in Arcady
Before the world was wise,
Before a man was crucified
For wanting to be kind;
Let's make believe we do not see
The mighty list of hows and whys,
The thousand little truths and lies
That will not let us find
The lovely laughter in our mind;
Let's dream us back in Arcady,
Let's make believe what used to be,
And find the laughter we would find
If we were not so wise and blind.

Minstrel

MINSTREL, Minstrel, what can you do?
Can you milk the cattle, can you hoe and hew?
Can you plough a furrow, can you sow the seeds?
Can you mow the meadow, can you pull the weeds?
Minstrel, Minstrel, tell us of your deeds!

I can hear the cowbells lovely in the lane,
I can feel the wind that blows the tufted grain,
I can smell the bluebells growing in the mead,
I can see the beauty of the ugly weed!
Hear me! Hear me! Here's a task indeed!
I can sing the wind that blows the lovely weed!

Forge

WILL I forget when I am old
The fire that rages in me now?
Will I forget I've hugged the cold
To keep the blazing of a vow?

Will I remember down the years
The fury of these frenzied tears,
The fever and the maddened fret,
The wonder if I will forget?

Home

DEEP down, deep down,
Underneath the water,
Where the light never was,
Where the dark will always be;

Deep down, deep down,
Never needing sunshine,
Never dreading shadow,
Is the place for me.

Healing

TIME is come and my wound is mended,
I am whole of my hurt again;
But what care I if the cure be ended?—
Long ago my youth was wended
Into a grave of bewildered pain.

Escape

I DON'T 'care which way's the wind
I am tired of caring.
I have sung and I have sinned,
And I have paid the daring.

I have laughed across a ridge
And wept it down behind me—
I'll never burn another bridge,
He who will can find me!

Like As Not

THEY say I will be well again,
And like as not 'tis true;
And like as not for days on end
I'll think no thought of you;
And like as not there will be days
I will be free from care—
But what has happened to my heart
Will still be waiting there.

Caliban

WE would discover lovely ways and wild,
But these unsated bodies keep the road;
And Nature mocks her monstrous, want-wit child,
Atlas, the hunchback, questioning his load.

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